

CONCEPTUALISING PERSONAL AND
HISTORICAL NOSTALGIA AS TRAVEL MOTIVES

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ABSTRACT

This conceptual paper reviews the literature that recognises the growing importance of nostalgia within the consumer goods markets and the existence of several types of nostalgia. It proposes a research model which examines the significance of nostalgic emotions within a leisure travel context. Specifically, it seeks to examine personal and historical nostalgia's relevance as travel motives that influence travel attitudes and travel intentions toward a tourist destination. Perceived travel risk is also investigated as a potential moderator between travel attitudes and travel intentions. Relevant theories are reviewed to try explain the various relationships and the paper concludes with a set of hypotheses.

BACKGROUND OF NOSTALGIA

There is an escalating use of nostalgia in the marketing of consumer goods and within the leisure and entertainment industry (Baker and Kennedy 1994; Goulding 2001; Holak, Matveev and Havlena 2007; Merchant and Ford 2008). An increasing number of companies are using nostalgia as a source of competitive advantage by positioning their products in such fashion, thus creating emotional attachments to brands and influencing individuals' preferences through the connection to previous experiences or eras (Fournier and Yao 1997; Holbrook 1993; Holbrook and Schindler 1994; Kessous and Roux 2008).

Activities in the past that served as subjects for nostalgic emotions are said to often become leisure activities later on which are viewed as unique or special (Holak and Havlena 1992; Mannell and Iso-Ahola 1987). Clearly, the so called 'pleasure travelling' forms part of such group of activities (Mannell and Iso-Ahola 1987; Moschis and Ünal 2008). Moreover, travel has often been found to be the response to what is missing, yet desired, in a person's life (Dann 1981). In addition, feelings have been found to contribute uniquely to persuasion (Deighton, Romer and Mcqueen 1989) where empathetic consumer responses occur in reference to emotion-oriented messages.

Lastly, there is the belief that even though consumers cannot literally return to the past, they can recreate it through nostalgic consumption activities (Havlena and Holak 1991; Stern 1992b). This argument appears valuable to the tourism industry since travelling can offer individuals the chance to physically revisit the place that has awoken longing sentiments.

GAPS AND OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

Despite the increasing attention placed upon nostalgia in the marketplace and consumer life, the domain still lacks a solid theoretical structure (Sierra and McQuitty 2007). The majority of the market research has been centred in the study of its antecedents and consequences in terms of consumer behaviour (Kessous and Roux 2008) with focus on brand attachment (Fournier and Yao 1997), brand preference (Holbrook and Schindler 1989), and individual collection of brand objects (Belk 1988, 1990).

Within the academic literature scarce mention can be found pertaining to the possible impact of nostalgia upon consumers' intentions to engage in leisure travel. An exception is provided by Sellick (2004) who identified nostalgia as the biggest travel motivator among mature Australians. However, no additional studies dedicated to further exploring such finding have been identified yet.

The present research seeks to tackle a perceived weakness within the marketing theory by conducting a study that explores the relevance of nostalgic emotions as travel motives (Sellick 2004), whilst differentiating among two greatly recorded types of nostalgia, i.e. personal and historical nostalgia (Baker and Kennedy 1994; Havlena and Holak 1991; Stern 1992a). The findings could potentially allow destination managers and marketer practitioners to formulate more effective strategies in order to meet consumers' needs and wants by better understanding their travel motivations.

RELEVANT THEORY AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Holbrook and Schindler (1991, 330) define nostalgia as “a preference (general liking, positive attitude, or favourable affect) toward objects (people, places, or things) that were more common (popular, fashionable, or widely circulated) when one was

younger (in early adulthood, in adolescence, in childhood, or even before birth)". Considering that nostalgia is a private emotion, variations are likely to exist among individuals regarding the type of stimuli that evokes nostalgic sentiments and the intensity with which they manifest (Baker and Kennedy 1994; Havlena and Holak 1991). This highlights the importance of focusing on segmentation bases that are associated with nostalgia or with the effects of attitudes held toward the past (Goulding 2001; Holbrook and Schindler 1996).

In spite of the different types of nostalgia described in the literature (see Baker and Kennedy 1994; Boym 2001; Davis 1979 cited in Holbrook and Schindler 1991; Havlena and Holak 1991, 1996), personal and historical nostalgia seem to comprise the essence of them all by distinguishing if the individual personally or vicariously experienced the situation that is causing the yearning. Personal nostalgia is directly and strongly linked to an individual's own and idealised past; historical nostalgia includes external sources that cover the whole past and that are outside an individual's personal experience as triggers of the emotion (Havlena and Holak 1991, 1996; Holak and Havlena 1992; Holbrook 1993; Holbrook and Schindler 1991). Noticeably, Stern (1992a) highlighted the relative need for imagination, verisimilitude, and empathy when evoking historical nostalgia since the moment or era predates the perceiver's real life experiences (Stern 1992a).

Tested on a travelling motivation context among mature Australians, Sellick (2004) found nostalgia to be the most prevalent travel motive of the population sample. However, the author failed to identify the specific type of nostalgia that was being felt by respondents. Given that personal and historical nostalgia are known to be prompted by different stimuli and to elicit different reactions (Havlena and Holak 1991; Stern 1992b), need arises to distinguish between the two when conducting consumer research. Moreover, based on the proven relationship between motivations, attitudes, and behavioural intentions, greater attention needs to be placed into further developing this area of knowledge (Falomir-Pichastor et al. 2008; Fishbein and Ajzen 1975; Iso-Ahola 1982).

The term attitude has been described as a mental state of readiness to respond and as a form of psychological outcome (Shim, Gehrt and Siek 2005). It has also been

recognised to be determined by a person's motives (Solomon 2006, 234) and is seen as an important predictor of purchase behaviour (Feng, Cai and Zhu 2006; Ha 1998; Kim, Weaver and McCleary 1996; Lutz 1991; Pitts and Woodside 1984).

Psychology theorists identified three underlying components to the attitude construct: cognitive, affective, and cognitive/behavioural (Feng, Cai and Zhu 2006; McDougall and Munro 1994). Within the pleasure travel dominion, Shim, Gehrt and Siek (2005) found the affective component of overall travel attitude to yield the highest correlation coefficient. This highlights the importance of emotions as enhancers of experiences (Tomkins 1980) and as influencers of an individual's behavioural outcomes.

Despite the definite lack of empirical and theoretical research devoted to the exploration of nostalgia's impact within the tourism realm, recognition has started to arise regarding its possibility to act as a travel motive (Sellick 2004; Shim, Gehrt and Siek 2005). Given the need to differentiate among two very distinct types of nostalgia, there is a need to empirically test the relationship between personal and historical nostalgia as travel motives on travel attitudes. Leading from the preceding discussion, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H₁: There is a positive relationship between personal nostalgia and travel attitudes.

H₂: There is a positive relationship between historical nostalgia and travel attitudes.

The relationship between attitudes and behaviour has been studied to a considerable extent within the social science dominion and, more specifically, within the consumer behaviour field (Pitts and Woodside 1986). The theory of planned behaviour (TPB) poses intention as the most proximal determinant of action and as being determined by attitude (Lemmens et al. 2009; Shim, Gehrt and Siek 2005). As such, it can be hypothesised that:

H₃: There is a positive relationship between travel attitudes and travel intention.

However, despite individuals' motivation to travel and the presence of positive attitudes, action will not irremediably follow since the prevalence of other factors can

prevent it (Crompton 1979; Laroche et al. 2004; Lee and Tideswell 2005; Sellick 2004). Goeldner and Ritchie (2006) classified these factors as barriers or risks. The types of risk that can be experienced include: crime, cultural, equipment, financial, health, performance, physical, political, psychological, satisfaction, social, terrorism, and time (Reisinger and Mavondo 2006).

More importantly, risk is known to influence individual perceptions and decision processes, whilst generating anxiety and fear (Dowling and Staelin 1994; Ropeik 2001). According to Reisinger and Mavondo (2005), perceived risk greatly affects an individual's intention to travel. Furthermore, understanding consumers' perceptions of travel risk can help marketers unveil actual travel behaviours (Hall, Timothy and Duval 2003; Sellick 2004). Within the tourism context, risk was defined as "what is perceived and experienced by the tourists during the process of purchasing and consuming travel services" (Reisinger and Mavondo 2006, 14). Lastly, tourists perceiving high risks in a destination are more likely to avoid visiting it, consequently experiencing a reduced travel intention (Cleaver, Green and Muller 2000; Lehto, Douglas and Park 2007). Therefore it can be argued that:

H₄: The positive impact of personal nostalgia on travel attitudes will be weaker (stronger) at higher (lower) levels of perceived travel risk.

H₅: The positive impact of historical nostalgia on travel attitudes will be weaker (stronger) at higher (lower) levels of perceived travel risk.

H₆: There is a negative relationship between perceived travel risk and travel intention.

PROPOSED MODEL

The preceding discussions of the relationships between nostalgia, attitudes toward travelling, perceived travel risks and travel intention can best be represented by a conceptual research model as depicted in Appendix A

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

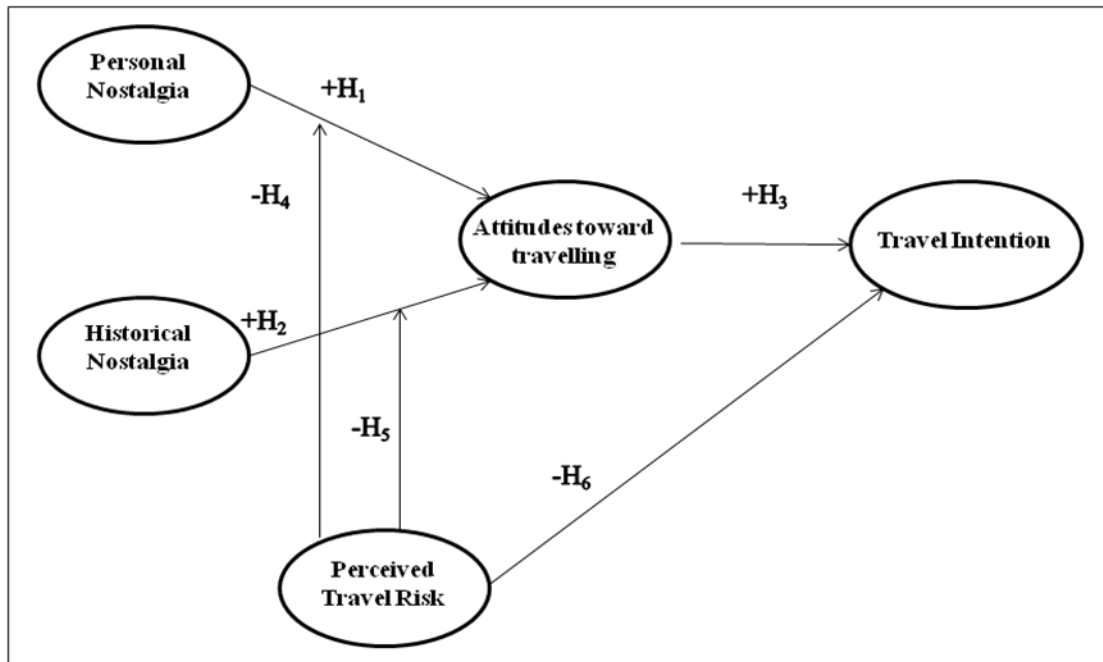
As mentioned, research related to the nostalgia phenomenon has mostly been centred in its connection to brand attachment, brand preference, and object collection (Belk 1988, 1990; Fournier and Yao 1997; Holbrook and Schindler 1989). Very limited exploration into the tourism realm has been conducted thus far with a clear failure to distinguish between two vastly recorded types of nostalgia, personal and historical. The present research proposal aims to enrich the theoretical base of the marketing discipline by reviewing the significance of personal and historical nostalgia as travel motives that can potentially impact upon a person's travel attitudes and intentions given certain perceived travel risks. The noticeable improvement of distinguishing what type of nostalgic emotion is being considered as a travel motivation by the sample elements is put forward.

The present proposal also contributes to the theoretical base of the marketing discipline by further validating the personal and historical scales to provide rigour to the nostalgia concept which has claimed so much importance over the last decade. The findings should assist in the understanding of nostalgia as a prevalent concept in today's modern society and the clear need to differentiate between at least these two known types. Regarding practical implications, managers of tourist destinations can benefit from the study findings by gaining greater understanding of the importance that nostalgic emotions play within an individual's travel motivation, attitudes, and intentions. Moreover, an initial profile of consumers who perceive personal or historical nostalgia as a relevant travel motive can be presented in order to assist marketers in their targeting efforts.

In order to obtain narrower and richer conclusions, the study will only focus on individuals with Italian heritage to test the prevalence of personal and historical nostalgia as motivations to visit Italy. This posits a limitation to the study by only examining the implications under an Italian framework. Moreover, additional elements that may affect a person's travel motives, attitudes, intentions, and perceived risks are not being evaluated within the realm of this research, e.g. personal experience (Feng, Cai and Zhu 2006).

Understanding consumers' perceptions of the risks associated with a travel destination is important in order to develop appropriate marketing campaigns that highlight the reduced chances of experiencing such negative outcomes and stimulate travel intention. Findings from this study can aid both private and public sectors on how best the risks can be minimised or eradicated to enhance patronage from tourists. These strategies must be publicised to the relevant agents in the tourism market to build into their communication campaigns.

Appendix A: Framework of Personal and Historical Nostalgia as Travel Motives



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